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PROGRAM NBC Nightly News STATION WRC-TV
NBC Network

DATE September 25, 1985 7:00 P.M. CITY Washington, D.C.

SUBJECT KGB Status

TOM BROKAW: Intelligence sources in Washington now have confirmed reports that a very high KGB official defected to the West in Rome this summer. Vitaly Sherchenko (?) is said to have had detailed knowledge of Soviet operations in the United States, Western Europe, and Latin America.

And as John Dancy reports, this is only one of several major KGB setbacks recently.

JOHN DANCY: The expulsion of 31 Soviets for spying has devastated the KGB's operations in Britain. American intelligence sources confirm that the Soviet KGB chief in England, Oleg Gordievsky, has already revealed the names of more than 100 Britons working for the Soviets.

GEORGE CARVER: Gordievsky was a gold mine, a platinum mine and a diamond mine all rolled into one. He knows everything that there is to know about Soviet intelligence activities in his country of assignment; in this case, the United Kingdom.

DANCY: The man on the left, Stanislav Levchenko, is a former KGB agent, who declines to be photographed because of death threats against him.

What effect must this have on the KGB's operations in London?

STANISLAV LEVCHENKO: The Soviets, of course, lost all of their agent network in Great Britain, which will take them at least five years to rebuild. They're trying to assess the damage which was done to the KGB operations, not only in England, but in Europe.

DANCY: The Gordievsky affair is only the latest in a long run of setbacks for the KGB. These are some of the 47 Soviets kicked out of France for spying in 1983. Since '83, American intelligence sources say 216 Soviets have been expelled for spying from countries ranging from Austria to Zaire. That compares with 204 expelled in the preceding eight years. The reason? The Soviet drive to steal Western high-tech secrets. Many experts say it has made the KGB reckless.

DONALD ~~JAMIESON~~ ^{JAMESON}: The emphasis is, do your operations. And if you take risks and get caught at it, okay. It's better to do that than not take any risks and not run any operations.

DANCY: Then, too, there is the good life and freedom in the West, seductive to KGB agents, who tend to be increasingly well-educated and worldly.

WILLIAM COLBY: In the old days it used to be we had people who would work for them for ideological reasons. But they don't have any ideological appeal anymore to any sensible person. Soviet society is a disaster.

DANCY: All of this has encouraged the American intelligence community. After the Walker spy case, suddenly it is the KGB which is taking heavy losses.